United Nations E/CN.9/2018/NGO/10

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
4 January 2018

Original: English

Commission on Population and Development
Fifty-first session
9–13 April 2018
Item 3 of the provisional agenda[1]

General Debate 3 (a): Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels

3 (b): Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration

Statement submitted by Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council[2]

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1] E/CN.9/2018/1.
[2] The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-00170 (E) 230218

Please recycle

Statement

Addressing the changing needs of young people in international migration

Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights is an international youth-led organization committed to promote adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights at the national, regional, and international levels. This statement, submitted on the occasion of the fifty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development, serves to advance this mission and urge governments to prioritize young people's rights in response to current trends in migration. Youth participation and inclusion is imperative to achieve sustainable cities and to realize the Sustainable Development Goals.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2013), 35 million young people below the age of 20 are international migrants and 6 out of 10 young international migrants live in regions with higher levels of social inequity. We urge that governments consider migrant youth in the creation of policies. This is a key element to create sustainable, inclusive, open-minded and safe cities and to ensure their socioeconomic futures.

We recognise the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and sustainable development. We also recognise that international migration is a complex issue that affects the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, and therefore requires coherent and comprehensive responses.

We should cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect of human rights, especially young people's human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, regardless of migration status. The term "young people" refers to diverse groups that include (but are not limited to) young people living with HIV, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer persons, and intersex youth, indigenous youth, afrodescendants, persons with disabilities, marginalized ethnicities, religious minorities, documented and undocumented migrants, drug users, disadvantaged economic and social groups, young parents, young women, homosexuals, refugees, young people in conflict and emergency situations, pregnant girls, dropouts, displaced people, language minorities, asylum seekers, young people living on the streets, those working in the informal economy, adolescent girls, sex workers, and young people deprived of freedom, among others, as acknowledged in the 2012 Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration.

We urge that governments:

- Practice meaningful youth participation: Young migrants, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities and opportunities to participate fully in society. Policies that will affect us must be developed together with us. This means governments must ensure the participation of young people in political spaces, and hold youth consultations in decision-making platforms and accountability mechanisms, at all levels, including in formulating, developing, implementing and evaluating laws, policies, plans and budgets.
- Recognize and address inequalities in migration context: According to the United Nations' seventieth session of its General Assembly (2016), 49 per cent of international migrants are women and girls. In many cases, their sexual and reproductive rights are violated, affecting their health and well-being. Due to prejudice and discrimination, they are more likely to become part of the informal economy and face unsafe working conditions.

Adolescents and young women, refugees, and migrants often face multiple forms of intersecting discrimination and lack of access to opportunities. Moreover, young people in conflict, including refugee minors who are separated from their parents, often do not have an immediate support system and may experience limited or no access to education, health and other basic services. In 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that worldwide 50 per cent of primary school-age refugee children are out of school and 75 per cent of adolescent refugees at secondary education level are out of school. Refugee children and adolescents are five times more likely to be out of school than their non-refugee peers.

- Protect human rights of irregular migrants: In many receiving countries, young people with irregular status become vulnerable to exploitation, either by their employers or state authorities. Exploited youth migrants and refugees often do not have access to complaint mechanisms or other justice systems, partly due to their irregular status and/or age. Young people face discrimination and violence when they are pushed to leave their homes, and when they arrive at their destinations looking for better life conditions, they often face regulations that violate their privacy. Compulsory health exams, mandatory testing for sexually transmittable infections and HIV, and pregnancy testing should not be a determining element in granting or renewing visas or work permits.

- Improve employability: Governments should promote safe and secure working environments and protect labour rights for all workers, including regular and irregular migrant workers, in particular women migrants and young people.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, young people face high rates of unemployment (13 per cent among young people). Governments must create and enhance safe labour conditions and develop gender-sensitive policies aimed at improving the skills and capacities of young migrants. Governments must eliminate discrimination in access to employment and training, and ensure that training programmes are accessible to those most vulnerable to unemployment.

Special attention should be paid to border areas, where travel between states is frequent due to employment and commerce. The lack of resources for the needs of those living in border areas pushes people to engage in the informal economy where they are vulnerable to exploitation. Human trafficking and other illegal activities are also common in these spaces.

- Invest in youth-friendly health services including sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education: According to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, and reinforced in goal three of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the right to sexual and reproductive health is critical for sustainable development. Young migrants and hard-to-reach youth need accessible, affordable and quality health care, free from stigma and discrimination. Young people must be able to access health services regardless of age, gender, migratory status, parental consent, HIV-status, marital status, sexual activity, occupation or other identity.

- Repeal laws that criminalize and restrict young migrants sexual and reproductive rights: access to sexual and reproductive health includes repealing laws that restrict the expression of sexual orientation and gender identity, restrict access to health services including safe abortion and affordable contraceptives, limit access to comprehensive sexuality education, and laws that criminalize sex work. Migratory status can greatly affect a young person's access to a safe abortion, and this can result in negative health outcomes.

Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights believes that all barriers to the health and rights of migrants should be removed. Instead, Member States should embrace their contributions to society and protect all migrants from discrimination or other forms of exclusion. Sexual and reproductive health and rights should be respected regardless of migratory or legal status. Young people stand ready to contribute and collaborate to enable the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable cities.